

[H. P. Walker]

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Life history

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 [107?]

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H.P. Walker, 70, was born in Leon co., Tex. His father moved the family to Hood co., in 1871, where he established a stock farm. Walker learned to ride a horse at an early age in attending to the many chores that fell to him on the farm. His ambition to be a cowboy was realized in 1883 when a Mr. Loving of the Ft. Worth Standard, a newspaper, purchased 3,000 cattle from Mr. Burk Burnett and Mr. Waggoner, who had assembled the herd at Wichita Falls, Tex., for sale. Among others, Mr. Walker was employed as a cowboy to trail drive the herd to the Yellow House Canyon in N.W. Tex. After five Yrs. on the range, Walker quit and entered the horse and mule business on the Ft. Worth Stock Yards, where he has since remained active and now resides at 2423 Market Ave. N. Ft. Worth, Tex. His story:

"Now, if you're looking for a story book cowboy, that lets me out because after I read about a 'Rootin', tootin' coyboy', two or three times, I lay the story down and find me something worth while to read. I believe I know something of the real coyboy's life too, because I spent about five years in the work when a man was a man and women weren't governors.

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"I'll begin at the first, I was born in Leon county, Texas, on April the 17th, 1867. I don't remember much about the place of my birth because my father moved us to Hood county when I was about four years old and established a farm. He also had a few head of milk cows and two teams of mules, along with a couple of saddle horses. I had to help do the work as soon as I was strong enough to do anything, so I could tell you something about the farm work too.

"You know how a kid is, he naturally wants to ride a horse as soon as the folks will let him so I bargained with dad to do more of the farm work if he'd let me ride one of the horses so I could handle it. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 I mentioned that I could bring the cows in, go get the mail, bring in wood, and do lots of things. Well, mother was against it because she had a couple of brothers that were cowboys and she was afraid I'd get pitched off and hurt. Well, dad figured that if I could do those things, that would give him more time with the crops so he taught me to ride.

"From that time on, I was either riding a horse, or astraddle a yearling. I don't have enough fingers and toes to count the times I got a hard whipping for riding those yearlings. Boy, dad'd lay it on good and heavy every time he caught me.

"Dad was getting along pretty well on the place, and had to go a good many places on business. When I got to be 12 and 13, he'd take me along for company. We took a trip to Wichita Falls in 1883, to look over some stock he intended to buy, and let me string along. I had already seen a lot of cattle by this time, but I saw my first big herd when we reached Wichita Falls.

"Mr. Burk Burnett had a big herd on the West side of the city, and Mr Waggoner had another big herd sort of Northwest of town. Dad and I looked both herds over and I met a Mr. Loving, who was in the market for some cattle. This fellow was a friend of my dad's, and was connected with the Standard, a Fort Worth Newspaper of that time. The upshot of

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this trip was that Mr. Loving bought 3,000 head out of both herds and hired me and some more cowboys to trail drive the critters out to West Texas.

“Well, you know how it was. I'd always wanted to be a cow boy. I'd always day dreamed a lot and read quite a bit about the cow boys and I just thought it was the most romantic thing I could do. Five years with it took all the romantic stuff out of me because I found out that it was just another job. Another way to earn a living and there's lots better ways of making money even if it is the healthiest life a man can live.

“Well, my dad signed a paper about my age, and bought me some cow puncher clothes so I'd be in line with the rest of them. I don't exactly know just how much he spent on them but I guess the hat cost about \$10.00, the boots about \$18.00, leather wrist gauntlets and gloves, several shirts, and some Levi cow puncher pants with the seam ends bradded down. I had three lassos because I was given a lasso on my three previous birthdays, and had kept all three of them in good shape. It just happened that I had all three of them with me so I was the best equipped cowboy to take the trail with that herd. The saddle was an old one that dad gave me after he bought a new one in the Fall of '82. Of course, we had horses but they were furnished by Mr. Loving, who bought over a dozen of them from a livery stable in Wichita.

“I don't recall the trail boss's name but his nick name was, 'Utah'. If I remember aright, he was supposed to have been a Northern cow puncher down in this country on a trip and took the job over because he had to have a job after his money played out. He must have known the trail alright because he certainly knew his business and was about the best man I could have wanted to be broke in to the business by. I never saw him ask a man one thing. He was about the quietest man I ever knew, yet the most active when action was needed. In a pinch, he never even called on anybody to fill a breech. He just jumped in and delivered the goods. There's many a tight spot comes up on the drive. Stampedes, long drives between water holes, and all sorts of things can happen.

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"I was so young when this trip took place, and was kept so busy that I don't recall much more than the beginning and the end of the drive. I do recall that we were about six weeks on the drive 'til reached Yellow House Canyon. That was because we stopped in places to let the critters graze or water, and the foremen was trying to make the job last. We finally located in the North end of the canyon where there was plenty of grazing and water.

"Now, I don't know what business arrangements were made but I do know that the Yellow House cattle were all over that country and they mixed into our herd. Three of us fellows were told to stay with the herd, and the trail boss along with the rest of the men were let go. Buck Stewart was one of the fellows that stayed with the herd, and he and I became the best of pals. That was easy to do because we were together all the time, ate together, slept together in a dugout, wet nursed the critters, and everything we did was done together.

"I don't know why, but we never saw one rustler, nor missed any cattle. Because we were on Yellow House Range, we never caught any wild horses. I believe now that it would have been alright but we didn't want anybody to think we were taking anything in those days. That's the way everybody was then. Of course, the older trail hands would have lassoed them a horse any time they wanted one but we were young ourselves and didn't know just how to conduct ourselves. The only thing we knew was to stay with the herd and keep it in good shape. We had plenty of horses to do it with since we had all of them that were bought at Wichita.

"After I'd been with the Loving herd about a year, I got the travel itch and decided to see some more country. The upshot of it was, that Buck and I both quit when Mr. Loving came out to see how we were getting along. It was the thing to do anyway, since he had decided to sell the herd and take a profit. After we left, we heard that he hired some of the Yellow House boys to trail drive the herd back to Wichita.

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"Buck and I drifted South to the 'Half Circle S' outfit on the North Concho River. To make their brand, you burn a lazy S, then burn a half moon over it. A lazy S is one made in a laying down position. I reckon there were about 8,000 head on the Half Circle S. Some way or other, I wasn't satisfied with this place either. It seemed like a fellow was all the time working at one thing or another. You had to be always pulling critters out of a bog, hunting out strays in the brakes, branding, driving, or something or other. I guess I was still looking for romance or something because I decided to make another change and found that Buck felt the same, although he hadn't mentioned it.

"We decided to go over into New Mexico, and the summer of '85 found us on the way. When we got to Seven Rivers, New Mexico, we heard talk of a big trail herd going North later on in the Fall. When we got all the details, we found that the cattle would be taken from the Williams and Wilson Cattle company range with headquarters on the Black River.

"When we got to the ranch, we found that George Williams was the ram rod, and that Wilson was a wealthy Dallas man that just bank rolled the spread. Williams put us on, and we went right to work. Of course, the work was the other work all over again. The only difference there was to it was that there were more brakes for the critters to get lost in, more bogs for them to get caught in, but there was more water for them and we didn't have to be always driving some of them away from the water to the grazing land. You know, critters are more like human beings than you'd think they were. Some of them are so lazy that they wont hustle while others just get everything there is for them.

"While with the cow pokes on the ranch, we heard about the drive that was made the year before. They said that a couple of big commission men from Saint Louis had bought the herd, and drove it across a plain that nobody else had used because it was such a distance from one water hole to another. They said that all the old timers around had advised them against using this route but they did anyway, and had gotten through.

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"We finally got into the middle of the big Fall Market roundup and this Hunter and Evans showed up to inspect the herd. It turned out that the Evans was the same one that was connected with the famous 'Evans-Snyder-Buel' Commission company.out of Chicago. Well, they picked out 3200 steers from the 10,000 head we had rounded up in three herds. The cow pokes had to cut these steers out and road brand them. If I recall it aright, we added a six to the old brand. I can't recall what the other brand was either, now. I do recall one thing that I'd like to get straightened out though. Everybody thinks because these story writers had all the ranchers stealing from their neighbors that that was what really happened. [Well?], let me tell you that such was not the case. Instead, we were given very strict orders to brand the calf with the same brand it's mother carried. No mistakes could be made about the mother either, because the calf always followed it's mother right throught the crowd, or herd. 7 It was a very rare case and an unusual thing for a calf to get away from it's mother.

"As we cut these steers out, we coralled them about a half mile North of the headquarters buildings. After we were all through, the ram rod told us that anybody with trail experience could go with the herd. Truth of the matter was, that all the boys there had gone up one trail or other at some time or other. Most of the boys didn't want to go. Buck and I were raring for the chance so we were taken on with the promise of a bonus if we stuck with the herd 'til it reached Montana.

"That was something that almost stumped us. Montana! We hadn't given the distance a thought and Montana was a long way from home. [We?] took it up anyway, though, and the herd started out. The first pop out of the box was a long drive with no water. We left the Pecos river at Fort Sumpter, and drove 70 miles to the Canadian River without a drop of water for the critters. Some people wouldn't understand the trouble we had but it wont take me long to explain. Since cows traveled about 12 miles a day, and steers about 18 miles a day, it took almost five days for the steers to reach the Canadian. Five days without water!

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"Again the cattle acted like human beings. You can take a dozen men with about the same physical appearance, and one or two of them, or maybe more, will lag behind in most any contest. It was the same with the herd. Some of the critters lagged behind. Sam Lowry, a Mexico man with a dubious reputation, was the trail boss and he gave two orders at the same time. He said that the first man that took or branded a critter other than it's right brand would be fired on the spot. The reason for that was, that a fellow might be 8 tempted to add a fine steer to the herd to help the percentage along. In other words, some men that paid for cattle drives paid a bonus according to the number of critters that came through alright. The other order was to let lagging critters go. Now, that's something to think about. You wouldn't think of doing that in this day and time. People were so honest in those days that a fellow could lay his pants down anywhere and have four or \$500.00 in them, pick them up again in the morning and the money would still be there. Well, the cattle brands were registered and when a man had three or four strange cattle brands in his roundup, he'd ship the herd, collect the money and forward it to the rightful owner without the owner doing anything about it.

"That 70 miles from the Pecos River to the Canadian was a booger to cross. When we got in about 10 miles of the water, the critters scented it and took out with their tails in the air. The closer they got, the more anxious they seemed. We boys on the horses beat them to the water, and with pistol firing and hat waving along with a little hollering, we got them not to bunch up and trample some of them. We got them all scattered out along the banks to drink. My!, but that was a sight. You could see cattle for a half a mile along the bank and some of them in the water, some of them that had swam across when the water got too deep for them and critters kept on pushing from the back.

"We stayed there on the banks of the Canadian for a day, then pushed on for the Colorado State line. After we passed over hills, through canyon cuts and valleys, we finally got to Trinidad colorado, where we discovered that the state had a quarantine on Texas cattle. This stopped us from driving the cattle anywhere. 9 The only out to get the cattle moved

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was to take the railroad, which Mr. Lowry did. After we got the critters all loaded, there were two train loads. Half of the boys were given a caboose on one train, and [t?] the other half were given one on the other train. We had to go all over the train ever so often to see if any of the critters had fallen down. You know, if one gets down, it don't take long for the others to trample him to death, or cripple him up so he'll never be any good any more.

"I can remember now how I'd walk along the cat walk over the cattle cars with the brakie, and I'd take the worst kind of a chance with my life when I'd climb down the end to look in the car so I could see whether or not any of them were down. Cattle cars in those days weren't near so good as they are today. They'd develop a flat tire in no time, and it'd be just as bad as a flat tire on a car but you couldn't stop the train like you could a car. They'd take the train on to a switch, or some place where they could trade cars and the critters in the car would catch the mischief on the way.

"When we got to Cheyenne, Wymoing, we were side tracked, and the boys unloaded the critters. We pastured them for a couple of days near the town, and proceeded to take the town in. Now, here's another place I want to say a word about the cowboy. Very few of the cowboys drank enough so's you could tell it any way but by smelling it on his breath. Out of the gang, the foreman was the only one to get drunk. He got real drunk and did a lot of things he was sorry for after he sobered up but that's the way with a drunk.

"We finally got the herd on the drift again, and went on 'til we crossed the Yellowstone River at Miles City, Montana. That 10 was the destination of the cattle, and Mr. Hunter met us, paid us off, then offered a job to some of us to drive the herd on to his ranch. Buck and I took him up but he had to get some waddies from Miles City because the rest of then had enough of that cold Montana weather in their systems. Man! But it was cold there. When we got the herd on the drift again, we didn't have far to go because the ranch headquarters weren't but 100 miles from Miles City. The ranch turned out to be owned by Hunter and Evans, and was called the 'HC Bar', after the brand which was made like this: HC-

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"After Buck and I got our money and turned down the offer of a job there, we lit out for Texas. We heard later that the rest of the boys went back to Cheyenne and stayed there 'til they blew their wages in.

"The first place Buck and I stopped at after we got into Texas again was the 'Peacock Outfit' with headquarters on the Main Concho River. They run about 8,000 cattle with the 'LT' brand. This was the first cow punching job I'd gotten that the boys didn't have to sleep in dugouts or outside [i?] the weather. Sleeping out wasn't so bad, though. If there was anything to a man, he'd have him a real good bed roll with quilts and blankets, besides a good tarp to cover with. You know, a tarpaulin aint like canvass. It'll really turn water and you can put something up-against it without it leaking like a sieve. Well, you take when a puncher fixes his bed on a small rise, digs small trenches leading off from the bed, and fixes his bedding real good, why he could stay there for two days without moving and it could rain as hard as it wanted to without getting him wet.

"Well, the end of my range career was in sight along about 11 the middle of the summer of '88. I got to thinking how much better life would be in some city where there were more people and a chance to make better wages. When the Fall Market beef was rounded up, I left the range for good. I came to Fort Worth, and entered the horse and mule business here on the Stock Yards. Of course, I've been in other businesses in my time but the most part of it was right here. on the Stock Yards.